Presumption and Faith.

It was not until Jacob was touched by the finger of God, so that he became a cripple for life, that he stood erect as Israel, a prince of God. Jacob never walked straight until he limped. And when, again, God would prepare for himself a spiritual father of the outside nations, he fitted Paul for his new work by giving him a thorn in the flesh—"a messenger of Satan" it was, but a messenger which was now set at God's work, by the will of God—in order that the infirm Apostle might do a better work than a well man could do. And when Paul besought the Lord thrice that he might be of sound body again, he was told explicitly that it was in just such a state as that in which he then found himself that God's power could be best displayed. And from that day until the present some of the best work in the Lord's cause has been done by the sink and the poor, and God has been honored and glorified rather by those who were in combat with disease and poverty, than those in the possession of bounding health and of abounding wealth—free from all conflict, and from the benefits which successful conflict brings.

It is true that disease and poverty are a consequence of sin, but it is not true that either the one or the other is always a specific result of sinning. Our Lord rebuked that notion among his earlier disciples as he would rebuke it among misguided Christians today. "Rabbi, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?" was their question to him on one occasion. "Jesus answered, Neither did this man sin, nor his parents (as the cause of this infirmity); but (this man became blind) that the works of God should be made manifest in him." And the works of God, in his sustaining grace and in his transforming power, are very often shown in the lives of the blind and the deaf, and the bedridden, and the patient wrestlers with disease, as those works of God could be shown in no other way; even as, also, the "poor as to the world" are often chosen of God "to be rich in faith," to the honor of God, and to the confounding of those who trust in their earthly riches. For men and women in buxom health to claim that they are blessed of God above their sick fellows, mainly because of their fullness of health, is no less presumptuous than it would be for a company of Christian millionaires to parade themselves with labels of their aggregate bank credits, and with boastful legend, "See whom the Lord loves."

In the struggle with disease, as in the struggle with poverty. God's appointed means are to be used with all wisdom and diligence, and are to be used in faith. To refuse to employ available human means in an hour of human need is in itself presumption. The prompting to refuse these God-provided aids is a temptation of Satan. To yield to such a temptation is more than a culpable weakness; it is an immorality—even though, like polygamy in Utah, it be shielded under the guise of religious convictions. When the Lord would miraculously heal King Hezekiah of his sickness, in response to the prayer of faith, he directed that human means should be employed for the recovery of the disease. A poultice of figs—which to this day, even in our country, is often used in such a case in preference to bread and milk, or flaxseed—was applied to the malignant boil, and God's promise was given that in three days—not instantly, but in three days—the faith-healed and fig-poulticed patient should be able to go out to church. When, again, Paul found that he must continue to battle sickness, although he would have liked to have health, he obtained as a traveling companion a beloved physician; and it is quite likely that it was on this physician's suggestion that Paul wrote that famous prescription for the stomach's sake, and the often infirmities of young Timothy. When James counseled the calling in of the elders of the church to pray over a sick church-member, he added the caution that they should not neglect the use of oil, which is the commonest medicine in all the East at the present time, as it was in his day. And as if to put this question of medical counsel at rest for all time, our Lord said specifically, "They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick"—do have need of a physician. To this delaration of our Lord the misguided zealots cry out with vehemence, "They that are sick do not need a physician." And here is not the only point where those who mistake presumption for faith are at variance with the plain teachings of our Lord.

If, for example, a husband found that his wife was shut in a room where she was suffering from charcoal gas, two ways would present themselves to him. He might throw open the door and windows in order to revive her by fresh air; but that would be employing human means for her rescue. He might on the other hand, leave her shut in, while he went for an annointing-pot, and gathered the church elders to pray over her. In the one case he would be doing his duty; in the other case he would be criminally presumptuous, and shamefully neglectful of his moral duty in God's service. And so all the way along in our possible experiences while struggling with sickness and with trial by ourselves or for others.

In all sickness, as well as in all times of health, faith in God is more to be relied on than any human agency; but faith never decides for God in a matter which is clearly beyond human knowledge; nor will faith ever tempt God by refusing to employ gratefully the means of help which God has already placed within its reach. It may be best for us or for our loved ones, to continue in sickness; if so, let us learn, in whatsoever state we are, by the will of God, therein to be content. It may be that God will grant our faith-filled prayer for restored health, to ourselves or to those dear to us; if so, let us use faithfully the means which tend to restoration; for the Apostle James, who knew as much about this faith-healing as any of the Bible writers, declares explicitly that "faith without works is dead;" and a dead faith is only another name for presumption.—S. S. TIMES.

Obedience to God.

Obedience supposes laws which should be recognized and enforced with due authority. No law should be made, but that which can be enforced, and no law enforced, but that which is based upon principles of right and justice.

Civil law is based upon principles of right, in proportion to what its originators assume to be right, and is enforced, by the people, for the protection of one another, and to place all upon a plane of equality, being governed by the same rule of right. But in the formation of civil law, men may err in judgment, and the law not be infallible. Men may err in the application of law, hence compulsory obedience may be obtained from some, to a law right in itself as a governing principle, but misapplied to the subject, or to law which may be properly applied, but wrong in itself, being based upon wrong principles. Law based upon truth, justice and right, should be obeyed and strictly enforced for the good of all. Here then is a point of discrimination, as to the right and wrong. If right in the sight of God, obey it, if wrong, then disobey. A law may be right in the eyes of the civil law, but wrong in the sight of God. Judge which shall be held inviolate. Inspiration says, "We must obey God rather than man." Man is held solemnly responsible to all laws of civil authority, when in harmony with the Divine Law. But, turning to the Word of God we find a law strictly infallible—a statute book in which are laws from the legislative halls of highest authority, and to obey them is to live, and to live forever.

It is a law requiring supreme obedience, a law, governing conduct, feeling, and character, a law containing the mind and thought of God, communicated to us, a law comprising sufficient for present happiness and godliness, and for salvation to all.

True obedience to God must be divine and universal in its regards to all points of the law of God. Otherwise it is not a perfect law. If some are allowed to choose a part, so may I, and by this selfish partiality, the whole law of God is rendered null and void, and our hope of salvation and eternal happiness falls to the ground. The whole structure is gone, and hopelessly do we stand upon the ever-shifting sands beneath our feet.

The requirements of God are the result of his good judgment and wisdom, and though we may not understand it all, yet it is his method of government, and the perfection of divinity is wrought in us by true obedience to his holy commands.

In the commands of God are found negative and positive duties, positive institutions as well as moral requirements, and to obey one to the exclusion of the other, will not insure salvation to the soul. Both are expressly enjoined upon us, and God's smiles and frowns are given in proportion as we obey each. God's "shall," and "thou shalt not," are both external and as immutable as he is himself.

The violation of the negative duty, "thou shalt not," was the sin which drove our first parents from the garden of Eden. This was the sin of Lot's wife, and that which caused the death of Uzziah invading the priest's office. To disobey the positive, "thou shalt," cast the individual with the one talent out into outer darkness. And would Peter not have submitted, his part with the Master would have been lost.

To gain the love and friendship of the Master, unquestionably is obedience. Our obedience should be prompted by a feeling of love for God, a feeling to please him, rather than to escape his judgement.

God should be first. His law must be uppermost and first obeyed, let men say what they may. God has a right to legislate, and require obedience to the same.

To obey God will be an advantage to us in this life, and in that which is to come. Upon no other condition is salvation promised, or happiness conferred. Hence, to be happy, is to yield to the wishes and will of God, and to obey insures salvation to the soul.—S. T. BOSSERMAN, IN MESSENGER.

Heavy-Laden.

Our Savior's invitation was to the laboring and the heavy-laden. How many of them there are, scattered through this weary world; laden with sin, with grief, with cares, with woes, with sorrows; pressed down by poverty, suffering beneath the hand of disease; tried, troubled, and afflicted.

The Savior bids the "heavy-laden" come to him and rest. Will you not come, O weary, heavy-laden soul? Life is brief, time is short, earth is a scene of trouble, toil, and conflict; yet there is rest to come. But we need not wait for that rest. There is rest even now to those who take Christ's easy yoke, and learn of him: for he has said, "I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls."

"Rest for my soul I long to find;
Savior of all, if mine thou art,
Give me thy meek and lowly mind,
And stamp thine image on my heart;
Break off the yoke of inbred sin,
And fully set my spirit free;
I cannot rest till pure within,—
Till I am wholly lost in thee."

—SEL.

"Take Heed to Thyself."

This instruction is appropriately applied to man's physical condition, as well as his moral and mental state. How many persons ruin their health and lose their lives through pure carelessness. They over-eat, over-work, over-act; they are rash, headstrong, and heedless; and by and by they reap the fruit of their rashness in accident, disaster, pain, misery, and various troubles.

Most of the sicknesses which people suffer are clearly avoidable. Most people die prematurely, and, so far as the time of their death is concerned, needlessly. Many are dragging out a living death, being a burden to themselves and to others, when they might have been strong, vigorous, courageous, helpful, useful men and women, if they had only taken care of themselves.

It is the business of parents to teach their children diligently the things they ought to know in order to take care of their own health; and it is the business of Christian men, and sensible men of all kinds, to watch over their own physical condition, and that of those committed to their charge. Every man must bear his own burden; and if we refuse to listen to the voice of wisdom and discretion, we shall suffer for our own neglect, and no one can relieve us of the consequences of our wrong-doing. If we are careless and rash, no one can watch us so closely as to prevent our injuring or killing ourselves.—COMMON PEOPLE.

Immoderate pleasure shortens the existence more than any remedies prolong it.